

BACK BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

FUR MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge is located on the narrow strip of beach between Back Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. The refuge also encompasses a portion of the islands in the bay and lies within the city limits of Virginia Beach. The bay marshes have been trapped since the first settlers arrived in this country and the Back Bay area has traditionally been an outstanding area for waterfowling. The muskrat population has decreased almost steadily since the refuge was established, with the exception of 1968 and 1969 when the population on the refuge nearly tripled. The change of holding one impoundment at winter water level throughout the summer has apparently resulted in some concentration of the refuge muskrat population in the impounded marsh. The population of the refuge is estimated at 2,500 muskrats and 2,000 nutria with the majority of the animals located within the 800 acres of impoundments.

Part I. RELATION OF FUR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM TO REFUGE OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of the refuge is to provide all that is necessary for the preservation of rare or endangered species such as the Southern Bald Eagle, Ipswich sparrow and the osprey, which are found on the refuge during certain periods of the year. The trapping of fur bearers should have no effect on any of these species.

Another primary responsibility is to provide feeding, resting and nesting habitat for migratory waterfowl. The dikes constructed on the refuge to impound approximately 800 acres of beach marsh are designed to provide some of the above listed waterfowl needs. The trapping of muskrats and nutria could affect the character of the marsh by reducing the number of animals that remove emergent vegetation and keep the marsh open for waterfowl use. It is intended to carry over approximately 40% of the muskrat population for emergent vegetation control. For the past two years one day a week has been utilized to fill cave-ins and washouts resulting from burrowing in the dikes. The burrowing of muskrat and nutria poses a threat to these sand dikes requiring some control to reduce this hazard.

Other refuge objectives involve management of the natural resources on the refuge for optimum wildlife population, habitat preservation and management, and wildlife oriented recreation. The trapping program is designed to take approximately 60% of

- 1 -

the muskrat and nutria in the impoundments and this should not interfere with the above listed objectives. Trapping will be restricted to the dikes, borrow ditches and adjacent marsh around impoundments A, B, C and D and subimpoundments A¹, B¹ and C¹. Attached map indicates the area described.

Part II. PROGRAM POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

It has been determined that a surplus of muskrat, nutria and raccoon are present on the refuge and 50 CFR 31.16 authorizes trapping on wildlife refuges where trapping has been approved and refuge personnel and trappers shall secure and comply with the provisions of the Federal Permit issued for that purpose. This permit shall specify terms and conditions of trapping activity and the rates of charges or division of pelts, hides or carcasses. The permittee shall also have in his possession the required state permit and shall comply with all state regulations. The pelts, hides or carcasses shall be sold at public auction or on the open market unless required for official purposes.

Refuge personnel will maintain constant surveillance of the program to assure conformance with regulations and to assure proper handling of refuge furs.

Part III. MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- A. Species - Seven primary fur bearing species occur on the refuge which are considered in this plan. The target species are raccoon, muskrat and nutria. If fox, mink or otter are accidentally trapped and the animals cannot be released without serious damage, their hides will be retained by the refuge. The seventh species, opossum, will not require any action, as for the present neither its pelt or carcass has value. Since the primary species to be taken are muskrat, nutria and raccoon and not otter, trap size shall be limited to number 2 size or smaller. Baiting of traps will not be permitted.
- B. State Seasons - The trapping program will begin and end according to state seasons. If a need should arise for additional removals, clearances must be obtained from the management biologist and Regional Office.
- C. Waterfowl Disturbance - It is felt that one trapper can accomplish the desired goals around the refuge impoundments, and if this should at any time cause excessive disturbance the trapping operation will be stopped.
- D. Weather Conditions - Weather conditions should not affect the program operation. It is anticipated that the daily checks can be accomplished in all types of weather without any serious adverse effects.

- E. Water Levels - Winter water levels in the impoundments are to be kept stable during the trapping season and only minor fluctuations are anticipated. The bay water levels will fluctuate rather drastically but since the trapping will only be along the dikes, these fluctuations should not seriously affect the program.

Part IV. PRESCRIBED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- * A. Trapping Units - Trapping may be permitted in impoundments, along ditches and dikes, and on marsh islands. The specific trapping units are as follows:

Unit I	- Impoundments
Unit II	- Long Island
Unit III	- Great Cove
Unit IV	- Ragged Island

See attached map, page 5. *

- B. Fur Bearer Populations - Estimates of the animal populations are to be made annually to determine if there is a harvestable population. Under normal conditions it is estimated that 1,000 muskrats should be retained and all nutria and raccoon that can be trapped should be removed. The following muskrat populations should be maintained: impoundment A - 400, impoundment B - 300, and impoundment C - 300. Trapping will not be permitted on impoundments that has the above listed population or less. The other fur bearers are few in number and will not be trapped intentionally. Strict monitoring of the first year's methods and results will be conducted, especially concerning the catch of mink, otter and waterfowl. If standard long spring or jump traps are too non-selective, the conibear, box or have-a-hart types will be required. Annual Fur Management Program will be prepared and submitted well in advance of the trapping season.

- C. Trapper Selection - Each trapping applicant will fill out Questionnaire for Fur Harvest Permit (Exhibit # 1) prior to selection date. To qualify, applicants must be at least 18 years of age and must also be able to demonstrate successful experience in taking the animals for which applications are being solicited. On specified date, included in annual program, a drawing will be held for the trapper for the year, and two standby trappers. Several months before the drawing

Back Bay Fur Management Plan

Revised 12/10/75

Revised by
C. J. Feltner 1/7/76

Submitted by

Robert H. Feltner
Acting Refuge Manager

Reviewed by

Howard D. Woon 1/7/76

Approved

C. J. Feltner

ACTING

Regional Director

1/8/76
Date

C. Trapper Selection

1. By October 15 the Refuge Manager will make an appropriate news release containing the general provisions for applying for trapping units. Applications will be based on a bid system.
2. Specific dates and hours for inspection of the trapping units will be designated annually by the Refuge Manager, and these times will be other than when the state waterfowl season is in progress.
3. Trapping permit application forms (3-2001), maps of the units and general trapping regulations will be available at the refuge office from 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM on weekdays from October 15 until the permit application closing date in December.
4. The Refuge Manager will designate special conditions for the specific units and provide this information with the trapping permit application. These conditions may be:
 - a. What species may be trapped.
 - b. Points of ingress and egress.
 - c. Proximity of traps to public use roads and trails.
5. An individual may bid on as many units as he desires. The highest bidder for each unit will be awarded that unit. Any units not awarded may be readvertised at the discretion of the Refuge Manager. Bid opening will be on the first Wednesday in the month of December. No bids will be accepted after 4:30 PM on the preceeding Tuesday. A tie bid on a unit will be resolved by an immediate drawing by the Refuge Manager.
6. A deposit of \$75.00 will be required with each application. If a unit is awarded, this \$75.00 will be applied to the bid payment. The deposit should be a Cashier's Check, Money Order, or Certified Check made out to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Deposits of all unsuccessful applications will be returned to the applicant.

Prepared by: Paul D. Daly ^{for Ben Bond} Date: 10-27-80

Reviewed by: R. R. Randolph Date: 10/27/80
10/30

Approved by: [Signature] Date: 10/31/80

7. The successful bidder on each unit must personally trap that unit. He may have one helper with him. Violation of any refuge regulation by the helper will reflect on the conditions of the permit in exactly the same manner as a violation by the permittee. In the event the permittee is sick or a personal emergency arises, the Refuge Manager will be notified and the helper may be authorized to check the traps alone.
8. Traps will be Conibear 220 or smaller. All traps will be checked at least once every 24 hours except when iced in. Failure to tend traps as required will be cause for immediate revocation of the permit, and said person's applications for future permits will not be accepted within three (3) years.
9. All trapping activities on the refuge will be conducted between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.
10. The refuge trapping season will begin the day after the close of the Virginia waterfowl season, and ends when the season of any species of those being trapped closes, under Virginia regulations.
11. Only muskrat, nutria, and raccoon will be trapped. Other species of wildlife that are found alive in the trap by the permittee will be immediately liberated. Any such unauthorized wildlife found dead or mortally injured in the traps will immediately be turned over to the Refuge Manager or his representative. Any captures other than the target species will be reported on the weekly reports or permit revocation will result.
12. The government can assume no responsibility in case of theft of equipment or animals.
13. Any successful applicant who, without an acceptable reason, defaults or requests a refund becomes ineligible to take part in any refuge trapping for the next three (3) years.
14. The trapper report forms (form BB-4) issued to the permittee will be submitted to the refuge office each week. They will be filled out completely. Failure to do the above will be cause for revocation of the permit.

Prepared by: Paul D. Daly for Penland Date: 10-27-80

Reviewed by: RR Rudolph Date: 10/27/80
10/30

Approved by: Wm. C. [Signature] Date: 10/31/80

15. Any trespass or illegal activities observed by the permittee will be reported to the Refuge Manager, or his representative, as soon as possible. If known, this report will include names, vehicle identification, location, time and violation. At no time will the permittee try to apprehend the person(s).

Part V. Physical Plant and Equipment Use Requirements

No new facilities are needed.

Equipment needed would include:

- a. Office equipment for administrative paperwork.
- b. One 4-wheel drive vehicle for survey, patrol and boat launching.
- c. One outboard boat, trailer and motor for survey and patrol.
- d. Binoculars
- e. Foul weather gear.

All the above equipment is used in other management activities and no purchases are needed in the near future.

Part VI. Funds and Manpower Requirements

Fall Population Survey	\$ 70.00	1 MD	ARM
News Releases and Personal Contacts	\$ 240.00	1 MD	ORP
		1 MD	ARM
		1 MD	Clerk
Awarding Permits and Related Correspondence	\$ 160.00	1 MD	ARM
		1 MD	Clerk
Other Correspondence, Permit, and Financial Processing	\$ 300.00	5 MD	Clerk
Supervision and Law Enforcement Patrol	\$ 700.00	10 MD	ARM
TOTAL	\$1,470.00	21 MD	

No additional manpower is required to administer this program under the existing staff at this station.

Prepared by: Cault D. Daly Date: 10-27-80

Reviewed by: [Signature] Date: 10/27/80

Approved by: [Signature] Date: 10/31/80

Weekly Trapping Report
Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Permittee Name _____

Unit Number _____

Day	Date	# of Traps	Catch Numbers			
			Nutria	Raccoon	Muskrat	Other
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

Notes - (weather or other conditions affecting trapping)

This report must be completed and turned in to the refuge by 4:00 PM each Monday.

Form BB-4